Faculty Writing Groups: Guidelines

Overview
A UM Faculty Writing Group (FWG) is a group that meets and works together to assist individual members with an issue or project they are working on INDIVIDUALLY. In a meeting:

- The time available is shared out equally or as agreed between members;

- Each takes a turn to present/explain their problem/task to the group;

- Group members devote their energies to assisting the person in exploring options, and they are supportive but challenging where appropriate;

- Each person concludes their time slot with a resolve/action plan.

Guidelines
FWGs function best when the guidelines for operation of the group are agreed and followed by members.

- Distribute time equally

- Keep the focus on the individual

- Other group members: listen, support, challenge

- Maintain a positive, cooperative atmosphere

- Ensure clear action planning, i.e. "By the next time we meet, I will…"

Facilitator Roles   (Fall 2016: Deidra Jackson, CETL GRA)
- Keeps time. Gives a one-minute warning.

- Collects email addresses. Keeps a brief summary of each person's goals, circulates by email, and   brings to the next meeting.

- Monitors and reports on how well the group stuck to the guidelines. Speaks up if the group   is off-track. Asks at the end, "Did we follow all the guidelines? Which do we need to attend to?"

Values underpinning Action Learning Sets
- The voluntary nature of group membership

- Action learning and a positive approach to life

- Reflection is a key to learning from experience

- No one is more expert than the presenter on their own issue

- Support and challenge

- Empathy

- Empowerment

- Quality of attention

- Trust and confidentiality

- Development takes time

- An holistic approach

ADAPTED FROM: McGill, I., & Beaty, L. (2001). *Action learning: A guide for professional, management and educational development*. (2nd ed.) London: Kogan Page.

Characteristics conducive to creating a learning climate in Action Learning Sets[i]

- A set can take any learning opportunity that is relevant to the set member and create the conditions for learning.

- Problems and crises are seen as important opportunities for learning and development. Major crises are seen as   growth points, and the culture of the set is one where it is safe to take risks. Failure is seen as an event to be   learnt from, rather than to be disempowered by.

- Good practice emerges not from reaction to crises but from set members balancing all parts of an activity, from   action, to reflection, to new thinking, to planning, and then back to action.

- Individual set members take time out to reflect on their learning and development. This becomes a cooperative   process rather than an individual one or one that happens rarely for the individual.

- The set encourages feedback from each other.

- Time and attention is given to individuals. The starting point is where they are coming from, recognizing their   individual needs.

- Learning and development are seen in the set as active concerns that result in action and further learning.

- The facilitator and set members explicitly draw attention to the process – how the set is working,   as well as the content that each set member brings.

SOURCE: Brockbank, A. & McGill, I. (1998). Facilitating reflective learning in higher education. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Initial meeting Agenda

- Where are you now and where do you want to be?

- What's getting in the way? OR What's been challenging for you?

- What do you hope this group will provide? (E.g. accountability, support, etc.)

- End with: "By the next time we meet, I will…"

Between meetings

- Work on your own goals.

- If seeking feedback on written work: Tell group what feedback you most need. (A bulleted list is helpful.)

- Agree how much time you'll spend per person. (Suggested: 20 minutes per person.)

- Give feedback on other people's work. Stick to agreed-upon time limit.

Process

- Facilitator will coordinate group meeting dates and times via email communication with interested faculty.
- Groups will be interdisciplinary and will meet according to dates and times coordinated by the facilitator

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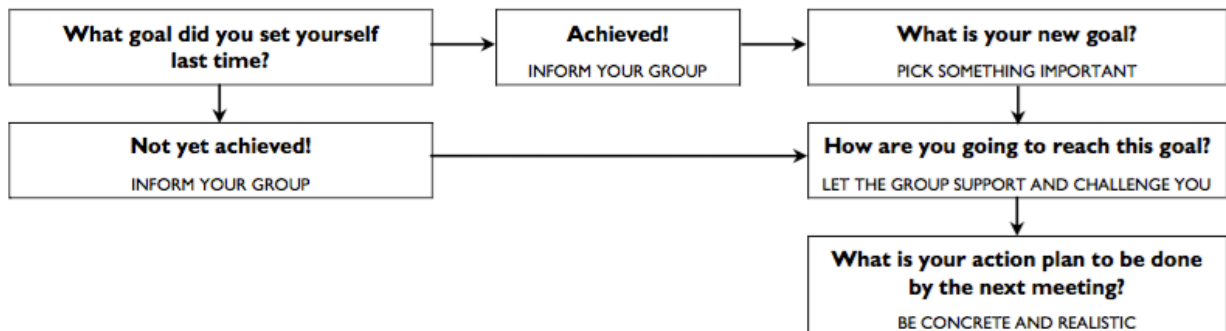
[i] Special Thanks to David Green, Director, Center for Faculty Development, Seattle University for sharing guidelines, flow chart, and resources.